

01/11/21 Monday

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Jared Kushner Reportedly Briefs Incoming National Security Adviser on Trump's Middle East Policy
by [Mary F.](#)

US President Donald Trump's son-in-law and senior White House adviser Jared Kushner was responsible for leading the "Peace to Prosperity" plan, an attempt by the Trump administration to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The plan, repeatedly refused by Palestinian leaders, was unveiled by the White House on January 28, 2020.

Kushner has briefed incoming national security adviser Jake Sullivan on the Trump administration's policies in the Middle East, David Friedman, the US ambassador to Israel, confirmed Monday during a closed hearing in the Israeli parliament, [Axios reported](#). According to Friedman, Kushner briefed Sullivan on the Abraham Accords process, through which the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain normalized diplomatic relations with Israel last year in negotiations mediated by the United States. Sudan and Morocco have agreed to similar deals with Israel.

The Abraham Accords marked the first public normalization of relations between any Arab country and Israel since 1979 and 1994, when Egypt and Jordan, respectively, signed peace treaties with Israel.

During the meeting, Trump advisers expressed hope that US President-elect Joe Biden will continue to encourage the normalization of relations with Israel by Arab countries like Saudi Arabia, Axios reported.

During the meeting, Friedman also presented the Knesset's foreign relations committee with his thoughts about what actions Biden may or ought to take in relation to Israel and the Middle East, noting that the president-elect is a friend of Israel and that the incoming administration will likely "press Israel on the issue of West Bank settlements, resume aid to the Palestinian Authority and continue to raise Israel's ties to China," Axios reported.

Friedman also noted during the meeting that Biden may attempt to resuscitate the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

In May 2018, the Trump administration pulled out of the JCPOA and reimposed sanctions against Iran that had been lifted under the terms of the deal.

During the meeting, Friedman reportedly stated that Israel should not immediately confront Biden over Iran but instead ask his administration to start a dialogue with Israel, the United Arab Emirates and other Arab countries before having the US rejoin the nuclear deal.

Friedman also reportedly noted that Biden shouldn't rescind Trump's policies on recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital or recognizing Israeli sovereignty in the Golan Heights, which were seized from Syria in 1967.

Axios also reported that White House envoy Avi Berkowitz briefed an unidentified former Obama administration official, who may be tapped by the Biden team for a Middle East-related position, on the normalization agreements.

In addition, Israeli lawmakers who attended Monday's meeting confirmed to Axios that Friedman said he recently met with Dan Shapiro, the former ambassador of the US to Israel, to discuss the Trump administration's policies in the Middle East. Shapiro "made clear" to Friedman during the meeting that he was not part of the Biden transition team, Axios reported.

Under Trump's [so-called peace plan for Israel and Palestine](#), Israel would be allowed to exercise sovereignty over approximately 30% of West Bank territory and the Jordan Valley. In January 2020, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas said his country answered the plan with "1,000 no's," [the Associated Press reported](#).

"We will not kneel and we will not surrender," Abbas said at the time, noting that the Palestinians would resist the plan through "peaceful, popular means."

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Right-Wing Microblogging Platform Parler Sues Amazon in Antitrust Lawsuit
by [Mary F.](#)

Parler is an American microblogging and social networking service that has attracted a conservative user base, including supporters of US President Donald Trump. Posts on the service sometimes promote far-right and anti-Semitic content, as well as conspiracy theories. Parler [filed a lawsuit](#) against Amazon Web Services (AWS) on Monday, accusing the company of violating antitrust law. Parler has also asked for a temporary restraining order against AWS to prevent it from removing Parler from its servers.

Amazon over the weekend suspended Parler from its cloud-hosting service in the wake of last week's deadly riot at the US Capitol by pro-Trump loyalists. The web-hosting giant accused Parler of promoting and inciting violence and failing to adequately monitor content on its platform.

"Over the past several weeks, we've reported 98 examples to Parler of posts that clearly encourage and incite violence," Amazon Web Services told a Parler representative on Saturday, according to court documents [obtained by NPR](#).

However, Parler in turn has accused Amazon of "political animus" and anticompetitive behavior. Amazon's "decision to effectively terminate Parler's account is apparently motivated by political animus. It is also apparently designed to reduce competition in the microblogging services market to the benefit of Twitter," Parler wrote in its complaint, which was filed in a federal court in Seattle, Washington.

In [an email to CBS MoneyWatch](#), an Amazon spokesperson disputed the claims made by Parler.

"There is no merit to these claims," the spokesperson said.

"AWS provides technology and services to customers across the political spectrum, and we respect Parler's right to determine for itself what content it will allow. However, it is clear that

there is significant content on Parler that encourages and incites violence against others, and that Parler is unable or unwilling to promptly identify and remove this content, which is a violation of our terms of service. We made our concerns known to Parler over a number of weeks, and during that time we saw a significant increase in this type of dangerous content, not a decrease, which led to our suspension of their services Sunday evening," the spokesperson added.

Parler's popularity surged after the November election and has continued to spike in recent days after Twitter last week permanently banned Trump's personal account.

On Saturday, Apple announced that it was suspending Parler from its App Store, one day after Google removed the Parler app from its Play Store, NPR reported.

Trump supporters stormed the Capitol building in Washington, DC, on January 6 to protest against Congress' certification of the Electoral College votes and confirmation of Joe Biden as the winner of the 2020 presidential election. At least [five people have died from injuries](#) suffered during the riots.

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Trump, Pence Reportedly Speak for First Time in Oval Office Since Deadly Capitol Riots
by [Gaby Arancibia](#)

Earlier, reports emerged that US President Donald Trump and Vice President Mike Pence had not spoken for several days, after rioters who supported POTUS broke past security barriers at the US Capitol, killing 5 and ransacking the federal building as lawmakers, including Pence himself, hid from the attackers during the confirmation process.

Amid reports of a strained relationship, it was revealed on Monday that Trump and Pence had met in the Oval Office earlier in the day, for the first time since the deadly January 6 attack on the US Capitol.

A senior administration official [told The Hill](#) the pair "had a good conversation, discussing the week ahead and reflecting on the last four years of the administration's work and accomplishments."

The unidentified individual added that both Trump and Pence agreed that those who stormed the US Capitol broke the law and "do not represent the America first movement backed by 75 million Americans."

It's unclear whether words were exchanged in regards to Pence allowing congressional lawmakers to move ahead with certifying the results of the US Electoral College system.

Although the Wednesday Electoral College vote confirmation was temporarily halted due to the siege, the certification was eventually completed, with Pence executing his constitutional duty to preside over the US Senate and oversee the vote.

At the height of the deadly attack by the president's supporters, Trump lashed out at Pence via Twitter for overseeing the ongoing procedure, with [POTUS tweeting](#) that his second in command "didn't have the courage to do what should have been done to protect our country and our Constitution."

The tweet itself came out hours after Trump pressured Pence at an earlier "Stop the Steal" rally on the White House lawn to reject the certification. At the time, Trump [remarked to his thousands of supporters](#) that he "hoped" Pence was "going to do the right thing" and send electoral ballots "back to the states to recertify" the results.

Despite growing pressure from Trump, Pence [earlier had made it clear](#) that he had no intention in intervening with the certification, explaining that only the lawmakers can decide to either accept or reject the Electoral College vote result.

With the pair at odds, reports subsequently revealed Trump had not reached out to Pence or the vice president's family as they were [placed inside a secure bunker at the Capitol](#) during the insurgent attack. Additionally, it was reported that the duo had not spoken in the immediate days that followed the deadly riot.

Many of Trump's allies, most notably [National Security Adviser Robert O'Brien](#), have supported the vice president's moves.

Amid a Democrat push to remove Trump from office either by invoking the 25th Amendment or by impeachment, it's unclear if the two officials discussed the ongoing process that is [expected to begin on Tuesday](#).

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Trump Gives Presidential Medal of Freedom to Loyalist Jim Jordan, Who Voted Against Election Results
by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)

The US House of Representatives moved on Monday to impeach US President Donald Trump for "incitement of insurrection" after a crowd of his angry supporters stormed the US Capitol last week after a "Stop the Steal" rally at the White House.

On Monday, Trump announced Rep. Jim Jordan (R-OH) would receive the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor, for fighting "cancel culture" and opposing Russiagate.

A longtime Trump loyalist, [the White House news release](#) announcing Jordan would receive the medal described him as "one of the most consequential members of Congress of his generation." The statement comes just days after an insurrection that grew out of protests heavily promoted by Trump and close supporters such as Jordan, who voted against certifying the US Electoral College's votes for president. Trump's rival, US President-elect Joe Biden, was the victor in those elections, and US federal courts have repeatedly rejected attempts by the Trump campaign to have the results thrown out or to open probes of their processes.

The release doesn't mention the events of January 6, in which thousands of Trump supporters stormed the US Capitol building intent on stopping Congress from certifying the results and in which five people died. Jordan helped build support for the protest beforehand hosted by Trump outside the White House, [calling it the "date of ultimate significance"](#) and claiming the November 3, 2020, election had been stolen by Democrats colluding with sympathetic companies like Dominion Voting Systems, whose machines were used to tally the votes in several states.

However, it counts several partisan scandals among Jordan's many accomplishments as a lawmaker, including exposing the botched Obama-era "Fast & Furious" operation by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives; opposing the Department of Justice's "Operation Chokepoint" anti-fraud investigation, which the statement calls "an early form of cancel culture and 'de-platforming' directed at law-abiding gun owners"; his exposure of the Internal Revenue Service targeting conservative organizations for tax audits; his opposition to the Russiagate scandal; and his defending of Trump during the Ukraine probe that led to Trump's December 2019 impeachment.

"I feel like this is something that I certainly don't deserve, but I so appreciate this president," [Jordan told Fox News earlier this month](#) after news broke of Trump's plans to give him the award, along with other Trump loyalists such as Rep. Devin Nunes (R-CA). "I appreciate his leadership and so many Americans do, and, you know, our family is honored by this."

Jordan was one of 147 Republicans lawmakers who continued to oppose the Electoral College results after Congress reconvened late Wednesday, following the expulsion of Trump's supporters from the Capitol. The sudden storming of the building sent lawmakers scrambling for safety, and [subsequent investigation has suggested](#) certain people among the insurrectionists intended to take lawmakers hostage if they found them, bringing along items such as restraining zip ties.

However, like Trump, Jordan later condemned the failed insurrection and [expressed support for Capitol Police](#).

Some other Republican lawmakers decided to reverse their earlier opposition to the certification, [such as Sen. Kelly Loeffler \(R-GA\)](#).

"When I arrived in Washington this morning, I fully intended to object to the certification of the electoral votes," Loeffler said. "However, the events that have transpired today have forced me to reconsider, and I cannot now, in good conscience, object."

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'Disgruntled Staffer' Reportedly Behind US State Dept Message Claiming Trump, Pence Terms Over
by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)

Earlier, House Democrats introduced articles of impeachment against US President Donald Trump aiming to remove him from office, and have separately proposed invoking the 25th amendment to do the same over the 6 January Capitol building attack by POTUS supporters. On Monday afternoon, mysterious changes were made to the biographies of Trump and US Vice President Mike Pence on the official US Department of State website, claiming that their terms had ended.

The original text of the two pages has been removed and replaced simply with the message: "Donald J. Trump's term ended on 2021-01-11 19:48:41," with the same message on Pence's page.

The two pages were quickly taken down, after word got out on social media about the edits.

[BuzzFeed News reported that the edits](#) were the work of a “disgruntled staffer” in the Department of State, according to an unnamed diplomat in the department. In actuality, both men’s terms end on January 20, when US President-elect Joe Biden and US Vice President-elect Kamala Harris will be sworn in.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has reportedly ordered an investigation into the incident, after an unnamed diplomat in the department described the system as “nearly impossible to hack.”

The incident comes just hours after congressional Democrats [introduced fresh articles of impeachment](#) against Trump, charging him with “incitement of insurrection” after 5 people were killed as a result of throngs of his supporters storming the US Capitol building last week in a bid to halt the official certification of the Electoral College’s votes for president. The college voted in favor of Biden, Trump’s rival, whose victory Trump has called fraudulent.

Pence, who was in the Capitol at the time of the attack, sought shelter with other lawmakers, after previously denying that he had the power to interfere with the certification process. Pence is not charged in the impeachment articles.

Five people died in the insurrection and [the Capitol building was looted](#), causing the District of Columbia to request thousands of US National Guard soldiers to occupy the city until after the inauguration in order to guarantee a peaceful transfer of power. It was the first assault on the national legislature since 1814, when British troops occupied the city and burned the building in retaliation for US troops torching the city of York, part of today’s Toronto, Canada

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Taiwan Introduces New Passport to End Confusion With China as US Drops ‘Self-Imposed’ Relations Ban
by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)

Taipei recently spurned proposed talks with China until the “one country, two systems” proposal that characterizes Beijing’s relationship with Macau and Hong Kong is dropped from negotiations. Beijing called the move a further slide toward independence for what it considers a rebellious province.

Taiwan has dropped the country’s formal name - the Republic of China - from the front of its passports in order to eliminate casual confusion with the People’s Republic of China. Meanwhile, the US State Department has removed “self-imposed” barriers to US contact with Taiwanese officials, infuriating the government in Beijing.

On Monday, [Taiwan rolled out the first passports](#) with a new design that highlights the name “Taiwan” by eliminating the English-language text saying “Republic of China” at the top. “The purpose is to increase the visibility of Taiwan so that our people will not be mistakenly identified as coming from China when they travel abroad,” Taiwan Bureau of Consular Affairs Director General [Phoebe Yeh told Reuters on Monday](#).

Reuters noted that during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, while the outbreak was primarily confined to China, Taiwanese citizens traveling abroad encountered problems when they were mistaken for Chinese citizens and barred entry under COVID-related travel bans.

The new passport still says Republic of China in Chinese across the top, but the name only appears in English in small text as part of the seal that adorns the center of the cover.

The move follows a decision last month to change passport entry and export stamps from a design featuring a plum blossom, Taiwan's national flower, to one that incorporates the outline of the island, [according to Taiwan News](#).

The government in Taiwan once ruled all of China, in the years after the last Chinese emperor, Pu Yi, abdicated in 1912 and a republic was declared. However, after the government lost the civil war against communist forces in 1949, which declared a People's Republic of China in Beijing, the Republican government survived only in Taiwan, which was relatively secure from invasion. Since then, both governments have claimed to be the sole legitimate representative of the Chinese people.

The US switched its recognition from Taipei to Beijing in 1978 as part of its opening of formal relations with China, although the Taiwan Relations Act spelled out how Washington would continue to informally support the capitalist government in Taipei in its fight to retain independence from Beijing. However, part of that recognition also meant accepting Beijing's position that Taiwan is a rebellious province of China and not a separate country.

On Saturday, US Secretary of State [Mike Pompeo announced he was discarding all](#) "self-imposed restrictions" on the interactions of US officials with their Taiwanese counterparts, saying they had been adopted "in an attempt to appease the Communist regime in Beijing." However, the State Department's move doesn't shred the Taiwan Relations Act, and the release notes that the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT) remains the only avenue for executive branch relations with Taiwan.

Numerous and unprecedented [high-profile visits by US officials](#) to the island in recent months have troubled US relations with Beijing, as have a slew of new proposed arms sales including missiles, advanced fighter jets and combat drones. Later this week, US Ambassador to the United Nations Kelly Craft is expected to touch down on Taiwan.

[The Global Times, a publication](#) owned by the Communist Party of China's People's Daily newspaper, criticized Pompeo's move as "once again straining the China-US relationship and pushing the Taiwan question deeper down the road of no return."

"Such a move is tantamount to committing a crime to structurally damage peace in the Taiwan Straits and jeopardize China-US efforts to keep the bottom line stable," the Times editors wrote on Sunday. "The dire consequences will be beyond anyone's predictions."

"In order to push the incoming Biden administration to overthrow the decisions made in the incumbent government's last-ditch madness and prevent politicians such as Pompeo from taking actual actions to break the bottom line, China needs to clearly show its resolution to firmly oppose the US' extreme provocations and counter the US head-on," the editorial continued.

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Gas to Green: Blocked From Exporting Petroleum, Iran Looks to Spark Domestic Electric Car Industry

by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)

Iran has some of the world's cheapest gasoline prices, but nonetheless, a promising domestic electric car design began introduction several years ago. However, the program was effectively canceled after the US reimposed economic sanctions, making buying parts for the vehicle both difficult and expensive.

The Iranian government is looking to jump-start a domestic electric vehicle (EV) industry. On Monday, the Science and Technology Department of the Iranian President's Office signed a memorandum of understanding with the Tehran city government laying out the framework for a program to attract the tech startups and firms that will one day form the basis of an electric-powered car industry.

"Fortunately, thanks to efforts by knowledge-based companies and start-ups, we are capable enough in this field," Sorena Sattari, the vice president for science and technology, said at a ceremony marking the agreement, [according to Iran Front Page](#).

"Many start-ups and knowledge-based companies are active in this domain in this country," Sattari said. "We have made considerable progress in the field of producing electric engines. One of the most important challenges in this field is to procure their batteries. We are removing these challenges with the help of knowledge-based and capable companies."

"If we eliminate companies from this process, we will definitely get nowhere. So, it is necessary that we tap into their potential and produce electric vehicles as well as electric engines in order to play a key role in reducing air pollution," he added.

A separate deal signed last September between Iranian power plant group [MAPNA and Irankhodro Powertrain Company \(Khodro\)](#), Iran's largest carmaker, promises to lay out the necessary infrastructure to support an electric vehicle market, such as charging stations.

Iran has some of the world's cheapest gasoline prices, [costing just 5 cents per liter](#).

Nestled in a valley surrounded by high mountains, the Iranian capital city of 10 million people suffers from severe air pollution brought on by stagnant air that settles over the area, trapping emissions from industries and automobiles. [Tehran Times reported](#) last week that since March 21, 2020, when the Iranian calendar year began, the city has seen just 15 days of "excellent air," while 88 days were regarded as unhealthy for people with breathing issues and eight days as harmful to all population groups.

In December 2019, the smog was so heavy it temporarily shuttered schools, [the Associated Press reported](#), and the pollution is credited with costing the city \$7 million in business per day.

In February 2020, MAPNA and Iran's second-largest automaker, SAIPA, signed an agreement to begin the process of developing commercially available electric vehicles. The deal included designing and manufacturing parts, building prototypes, testing the vehicles and bringing them to market, [Iran's Financial Tribune reported](#).

SAIPA first introduced an electric-powered conversion of its Saina subcompact sedan, a derivation of the Kia Pride, in 2018, but [rollout was effectively canceled](#) after the US reimposed economic sanctions on Iran later that year.

Also in February 2020, Khodro unveiled its own all-electric car. [According to Mehr News Agency](#), the vehicle is made of 50% domestically manufactured parts and has a range of 220 kilometers before it needs to recharge.

However, the news agency warned that industry data suggests an electric car is likely to cost two to three times what a gasoline-powered car costs.

Before the US unilaterally withdrew from the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and reimposed strangling economic sanctions on Iran, the southwest Asian country was a major exporter of petroleum, which accounted for 17% of Iran's gross domestic product in 2018, [according to World Bank data](#). The Trump administration claimed Iran had secretly violated the terms of the deal, which restrict its production of nuclear material - claims Iran denied and no other signatory could find evidence to support. In response, Washington sought to force Iran's oil exports to zero.

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DC Mayor Bowser Asks Interior Dept to Cancel All Protest Permits for Biden's Inauguration Day by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)

The previous Inauguration Day in 2017 saw widespread demonstrations in the capital city, and police made sweeping arrests of hundreds of protesters. However, the recent insurrection at the US Capitol building is without precedent, and the Washington, DC, government is looking to ensure a peaceful transfer of power.

District of Columbia Mayor Muriel Bowser has petitioned the US Department of the Interior to extend the special security period in the nation's capital associated with the presidential inauguration as well as to cancel all protest permits scheduled for the days surrounding the January 20 transfer of power.

On Monday, [Bowser asked the Department of Homeland Security](#) to take several measures designed to enhance security in Washington, DC, ahead, during and after the presidential inauguration. Her request comes just days after a violent insurrection by supporters of US President Donald Trump, who stormed the US Capitol building and dispersed the national legislature in a bid to overturn the results of the November election, which Trump lost to US President-elect Joe Biden.

Later on Monday, the US Department of Homeland Security [granted one of Bowser's requests](#): to begin the National Special Security Event period on January 13 instead of January 19. The designation allows a plethora of special security measures, including sweeps by bomb-detecting dogs, extensive road closures, a US National Guard presence and the deployment of sharpshooters.

However, the other requests remained unanswered when this story went to publication. Acting DHS chief [Chad Wolf announced his resignation](#) later on Monday. He said Federal Emergency Management Agency director Pete Gaynor would take over his position.

The DC mayor's other requests included a pre-disaster declaration; a special joint coordination effort between the departments of Justice, Defense and Homeland Security, as well as

Congress and the Supreme Court, to establish a joint deployment plan for various police forces across the entire city; a daily threat briefing by the FBI for “the DC Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency (HSEMA) and MPD and all law enforcement entities operating in the District of Columbia.”

Bowser separately asked the US Department of the Interior to cancel all public gathering permits in the city until January 24, noting the city had repeatedly made the request since June 2020 in order to limit the spread of COVID-19.

The Pentagon has already deployed 6,200 National Guard troops to Washington, DC, and its immediate environs until at least February 6, but [the guard has been authorized to deploy](#) as many as 15,000 troops if additional forces are requested by Bowser.

Presidential inaugurations typically see demonstrations by both supporters of the incoming administration as well as its opponents, many of whom line the parade route down Pennsylvania Avenue connecting the US Capitol to the White House.

At US President Donald Trump’s inauguration in January 2017, thousands demonstrated against his rise to power, and [protesters clashed with police](#) in the city’s streets during militant protests that saw the windows of several shops smashed and a limousine torched as police deployed tear gas and flash-bang grenades. Mass arrests saw 234 people charged with felony riot charges, but in the end, [all the charges were dropped](#).

The violent storming of the US Capitol on January 6 immediately followed a “Stop the Steal” rally hosted by Trump at the White House. [As protesters swarmed the national legislature](#), lawmakers scrambled for safety, and five rioters and police were killed in the ensuing chaos. However, there is also evidence of some police officers cooperating with the rioters, including opening doors and barricades to let them in and even snapping selfies with them, [as Sputnik reported](#).

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Two US Capitol Police Suspended, 10-15 Under Investigation After Pro-Trump Insurrection by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)

In the extensive video footage captured during the January 6 uprising, numerous instances in which US Capitol Police seem to help the insurrectionists to enter and maneuver about the Capitol building were recorded and posted on social media.

In the aftermath of the insurrection by supporters of US President Donald Trump who stormed the US Capitol, two US Capitol Police officers have been suspended and more than a dozen are under investigation for their actions during the incident.

On Monday, US Rep. Tim Ryan (D-OH), who heads the Legislative Branch Appropriations Subcommittee in the House, [told reporters that two US Capitol Police officers](#) had been suspended. One officer took a selfie with one of the rioters inside the Capitol, and another put on a red “Make America Great Again” baseball cap, a badge of Trump and his ideological supporters, and allegedly directed the rioters toward their targets while on duty.

Ryan further noted another 10 to 15 officers were under investigation, and [the DCist reported that at least](#) one police officer from the force of Anne Arundel County, a nearby Maryland county, was being investigated for potentially having participated in the insurrection.

As the insurrection was still unfolding, [Sputnik was among the first to report](#) on potential collusion between Capitol Police officers and the insurrectionists, including opening doors and pulling back barricades, allowing the rioters to enter the building unimpeded.

However, at other places inside and outside the national legislature, [security officials met the rioters with force](#), deploying tear gas and flash-bang grenades as rioters engaged them in hand-to-hand combat.

Five people died in the uprising, including a protester who was shot by a Capitol Police officer and another officer who was [beaten with a fire extinguisher](#). Shortly after, US Capitol [Police Chief Steven Sund resigned](#).

[The Washington Post reported](#) that police departments from across the country have their hands full at present with investigations of reported involvement in the insurrection by officers on their force. [Sputnik has also reported on the extensive](#) participation in the riot by white nationalist and neo-Nazi group members, including people who helped organize the August 2017 “Unite the Right” rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, during which an attendee killed a counterprotester in a car ramming attack.

In addition, the Pentagon is attempting to probe the potential involvement of active-duty service members in the uprising, but Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy told reporters the process is difficult. However, several retired veterans are known to have participated, including retired Air Force senior airman Ashli Babbitt, the protester killed by Capitol Police gunfire, and retired Air Force Lt. Col. Larry Rendall Brock Jr., who was arrested on Sunday, [according to Military Times](#).

Some other veterans identified in the footage include retired Air Force Lt. Colonel. Larry Brock, whom [the New Yorker identified as an insurrectionist](#) photographed carrying restraining zip ties inside the Senate chamber.

The January 6 insurrection began shortly after a “Stop the Steal” rally hosted by Trump at the White House, during which he encouraged his supporters to take action in defense of US democracy. Trump has claimed the outcome of the November 3, 2020, election was fraudulent and that he is the rightful winner, not US President-elect Joe Biden. The goal of the insurrection was to stop Congress from certifying the election results.

Earlier on Monday, House Democrats [introduced articles of impeachment](#) against Trump for allegedly inciting the insurrection, and the Pentagon has deployed [more than 6,000 National Guard troops](#) to Washington, DC, at the request of the city government in order to maintain order and ensure a peaceful transfer of power.

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Biden Administration Must ‘Immediately’ Close Guantanamo Prison, UN Experts Urge
by [Gaby Arancibia](#)

The Guantanamo Bay detention center is located on the southern tip of Cuba and has long been a thorn in the side of many human rights activists who have called out the US military camp for employing torture tactics to interrogate detainees, many of whom have been indefinitely imprisoned without being charged with or convicted of any crime.

Days ahead of US President-elect Joe Biden's inauguration, a panel of experts from the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights [issued a statement on Monday](#) calling for the incoming US administration to close the infamous detention facility.

Experts noted that Guantanamo "is a place of arbitrariness and abuse, a site where torture and ill-treatment was rampant and remains institutionalized, where the rule of law is effectively suspended and where justice is denied."

Officials further indicated that prisoners' health will continue to rapidly decline as a result of the center's ever-present inhumane conditions, and that the COVID-19 pandemic will only worsen health vulnerabilities among individuals there.

"We must not forget these detainees, who have been subjected to torture or victims of comparable trauma, and still languish in Guantánamo, in a virtual legal limbo, outside the reach of the constitutional judicial system of the United States," the experts said.

"The prolonged and indefinite detention of individuals, who have not been convicted of any crime by a competent and independent judicial authority operating under due process of law, is arbitrary and constitutes a form of cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or even torture."

At present, an estimated 40 detainees remain at the facility, with only nine individuals having been either charged with or convicted of a crime, according to the UN panel. At the height of its use, the military camp had several hundred prisoners detained on the grounds.

"We appeal to the US authorities to prosecute, in full compliance with human rights law, the individuals held at Guantanamo Bay or, alternatively, immediately release or repatriate them while respecting the principle of non-refoulement," the experts added. "With a new administration coming into office in the United States and as we approach the 20th anniversary of 9/11, Guantanamo must finally be closed forever."

The panel of experts also called on the incoming Biden administration to quickly launch impartial investigations into allegations of human rights violations at the detention center that have been voiced throughout the years, as well as to implement measures to rectify and rehabilitate prisoners who endured any forms of ill-treatment or torture.

The remarks, echoing previous ones [issued on the same day in 2016](#) ahead of the inauguration of US President Donald Trump, came as the military camp marked the 19th anniversary of the detention center's establishment, which came in 2002 after Cabinet members informed then-US President George W. Bush that detainees at the site would not be entitled to any protections afforded under the Geneva Conventions that stipulated even detained, unlawful combatants are to be treated humanely.

Calls for the center to close and for all prisoners to be released have repeatedly been voiced by human rights organizations, to no avail. During the his administration, former US President Barack Obama vowed to shutter the detention camp but was met with several roadblocks by Republican lawmakers who had no intention of allowing the facility's closure.

In fact, Congressional Republicans [passed legislation that prevented](#) the use of funds to close or abandon the prison, transfer detainees elsewhere or even build or modify the facility to provide improved shelters. In his final [State of the Union address in 2016](#), Obama stated that

the prison was “expensive,” “unnecessary” and “only serves as a recruitment brochure for our enemies.”

Obama’s “recruitment brochure” remark touched on findings made in the 2014 report [released by the US Senate Select Committee on Intelligence](#) that disclosed details about “enhanced interrogation techniques,” otherwise known as torture practices, that were used by the CIA against suspected terrorists.

The 2014 report itself noted that detainees were subjected to mock burials, aggressive body cavity searches and waterboarding, among other practices. [Sketches drawn in captivity](#) by prisoner Abu Zubaydah, who has been held at the facility without charges and has been subjected to waterboarding more than 80 times, provide additional insight into since-outlawed interrogation practices.

The CIA has claimed that by torturing prisoners, it managed to extract information that helped to capture additional terrorists and individuals who played a role in orchestrating the September 11 attacks. However, the Senate report concluded that was not the case, as the [techniques were illegal, immoral and ineffective](#).

Although Biden hasn’t often broached the Guantanamo Bay topic, he has indicated that he is in favor of closing down the facility. In June 2020, Biden’s campaign [told the New York Times](#) that he supported shuttering the detention center, but stopped short of explaining how he planned to do so.

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‘Huge Uprising’: FBI Memo Reveals Armed US Protests Planned at State Capitols Nationwide - Report
by [Gaby Arancibia](#)

Since the riots that unfolded at the US Capitol on January 6, law enforcement officials have upped security measures ahead of Inauguration Day over concerns that violent protests may unfold, as tensions remain high among supporters of US President Donald Trump.

An internal memo from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) revealed Monday that officials were made aware of armed protests that were being planned at all 50 state capitols across the Land of the Free, including the US Capitol.

[Obtained by ABC News](#), the FBI bulletin indicates agents received information that also detailed an unidentified group was calling for the “storming” of state, local and federal courthouses if Trump were to be removed from office before Inauguration Day. Administrative buildings were also considered targets, according to the agency.

"The FBI received information about an identified armed group intending to travel to Washington, DC on 16 January," the memo states. "They have warned that if Congress attempts to remove POTUS via the 25th Amendment, a huge uprising will occur."

Additionally, the same group is said to be making plans to “storm” government offices across every US state on Inauguration Day.

The [bulletin reviewed by the outlet](#) outlines that "armed protests" at state capitols are being planned from January 16 through "at least" January 20, and that they may begin at the US Capitol on January 17.

Sources familiar with the matter told ABC that in light of the development, federal law enforcement officials have urged police agencies to bolster their security measures at statehouses nationwide. In fact, US authorities are set to [deploy up to 15,000 National Guard troops](#) in Washington, DC, to support law enforcement officials before and during the inauguration of US President-elect Joe Biden.

Reports of the FBI bulletin came as Democrats in the US House of Representatives introduced a [single article of impeachment against Trump](#) for incitement of insurrection in the wake of the deadly Capitol siege that claimed the lives of at least five individuals, including [Capitol Police Officer Brian Sicknick](#). The article itself stemmed from remarks by Trump at the "Stop the Steal" rally, when he called on his supporters to keep fighting to prevent the presidential election from being "stolen."

The sole impeachment article was introduced in the congressional chamber after House Republicans blocked a request by Democrats to unanimously pass a resolution calling on US Vice President Mike Pence to invoke the 25th Amendment to remove Trump from office. Support for invoking the amendment, including from some Republicans, surfaced last week after the Capitol riot.

The [impeachment measure states](#) that Trump has "demonstrated that he will remain a threat to national security, democracy and the Constitution if allowed to remain in office and has acted in a manner grossly incompatible with self-governance and the rule of law."

House Democrats will vote on the 25th Amendment measure on Tuesday and on the impeachment article on Wednesday, [according to a schedule update](#). If the House manages to clear the impeachment article, it will mark the second time that the chamber has voted in favor of impeaching Trump.

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Facebook Bans Any Mention of 'Stop the Steal' on Platform Ahead of Biden Inauguration
by [Gaby Arancibia](#)

Social media giant Facebook implemented a series of measures during the heated US presidential election to clamp down on misinformation, and in the wake of rioters storming the US Capitol the platform has renewed its efforts ahead of US President-elect Joe Biden's inauguration.

Facebook [announced on Monday](#) that it will begin removing any and all content that contains the phrase "stop the steal" from its platform in the days leading up to Inauguration Day on January 20, 2021.

The company revealed that preparations for Inauguration Day began in 2020 but "took on new urgency after last week's violence in Washington, DC, and we are treating the next two weeks as a major civic event."

"We're taking additional steps and using the same teams and technologies we used during the general election to stop misinformation and content that could incite further violence during these next few weeks," reads the advisory, which explains that posts using the "stop the steal" phrase will be removed in line with the company's Coordinating Harm policy.

The policy update, co-authored by Facebook Vice President of Integrity Guy Rosen and Vice President of Global Policy Management Monika Bickert, states that the company previously removed the original "Stop the Steal" group from its platform in November 2020, and that it has continued to remove similar pages, groups and events that call for violence.

"It may take some time to scale up our enforcement of this new step but we have already removed a significant number of posts," the post adds, noting that Facebook will also keep its Integrity Operations Center functioning "at least through January 22 to monitor and respond to threats in real time" in light of the deadly Capitol insurrection.

Additionally, Facebook will be extending its temporary pause on political and election-related advertisements, including any ad from a politician - even US President Donald Trump. The social media giant will also be livestreaming the inauguration, and after the inauguration will take up efforts to label posts that attempt to delegitimize the results of the election.

Facebook's latest move comes after it indefinitely suspended Trump from its platform and after COO Sheryl Sandberg [remarked in a Monday interview with Reuters](#) that the Capitol riots were "largely organized" on other internet services, not Facebook.

However, Facebook is far from the only social media platform to have taken action against Trump in light of the January 6 rally-turned-riot. In fact, [after Twitter permanently suspended Trump's account](#), multiple companies, including Facebook-owned Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube and Twitch took action against the president, and Reddit banned a prominent community of his supporters.

Trump's tense relationship with social media platforms became apparent just a few months before the US election, when he began sharing posts voicing baseless claims about mail-in ballot fraud. The unsubstantiated claims came amid a nationwide effort to promote the use of mail-in ballots as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the months that followed Trump's initial allegations, dozens of posts on Twitter and Facebook were either flagged or removed entirely for violating company policies, developments that eventually prompted Trump to begin calling for congressional lawmakers to repeal Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act. The decades-old legislation provides online platforms with legal protections from liability for content shared by users.

The final straw that prompted many companies to block Trump's access to their platforms came as a result of the president's appearance at the "Stop the Steal" rally last week where he called on his supporters to not allow the US election to be "stolen." In the hours that followed, hundreds stormed past security barriers and into the US Capitol as lawmakers worked to certify the results of the election.

Since the violent unrest, dozens have been arrested and charged for storming the Capitol as Trump [faces a possible forced removal from office](#). The US House of Representatives is expected to vote on Tuesday on invoking the 25th Amendment to remove the president from office, and take up efforts on Wednesday to vote on an impeachment article for incitement of insurrection.

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GOP Lawmaker Deactivates Twitter Account Following Suspension Over Capitol Riot Posts
by [Evan Craighead](#)

Following the Capitol riots on January 6, Twitter has moved to enforce a number of new guidelines that have led to deletions of posts and suspensions of several accounts, including the personal profile of outgoing US President Donald Trump.

Newly sworn-in Rep. Barry Moore (R-AL) recently joined the ranks of Republican lawmakers pushing back against Twitter's new policies after he deactivated his personal account on the platform.

"[W]e have more arrests for stealing a podium on Jan. 6th than we do for stealing an election on November 3rd," he tweeted, referring to Adam Johnson, the 36-year-old man who was arrested after being photographed at the Capitol carrying the lectern of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA). [The married father of five](#) was booked in Florida's Pinellas County jail two days after the incident and slapped with a slew of charges, including one count of knowingly entering or remaining in any restricted building or grounds without lawful authority and one count of theft of government property.

"I shut down my personal Twitter today. No way I'm going to support their biases. I am on Parler," Moore [wrote in a Facebook post, according to WDHN](#). "We must fight #censorship." Moore's official congressional Twitter account does remain active for office-related information, however.

The self-imposed deactivation followed a suspension over a number of tweets first highlighted by journalist Jamie Dupree.

According to Shana Teehan, Moore's chief of staff, the lawmaker's move was in direct reaction to the silencing of right-wing voices on Twitter.

"Yes, he was suspended, but then deactivated his account because of the censorship of conservative voices he saw happening," she told WDHN.

Moore's personal protest comes alongside the widespread social media fallout that accompanied violence on January 6 in Washington, DC. Citing the promotion or inciting of violence, Twitter flagged and even deleted a number of the US president's tweets before ultimately banning him from the platform permanently.

"After close review of recent Tweets from the @realDonaldTrump account and the context around them we have permanently suspended the account due to the risk of further incitement of violence," [Twitter Safety announced on January 8](#).

Many have spoken out against the social media platform's banning decisions. The Trump ban has also raised questions about the precedent that is being set for the online censorship or silencing of world leaders.

"I don't like anybody being censored or taking away from the right to post a message on Twitter or Face[book]. I don't agree with that, I don't accept that," said Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador on Thursday, [according to the Associated Press](#).

"How can you censor someone: 'Let's see, I, as the judge of the Holy Inquisition, will punish you because I think what you're saying is harmful,'" López Obrador continued. "Where is the law, where is the regulation, what are the norms? This is an issue of government; this is not an issue for private companies."

However, legal experts, such as Virginia Commonwealth University constitutional law expert Dr. John Aughenbaugh, have contested the idea that Twitter is overstepping its boundaries rather than simply enforcing the guidelines users agreed to.

"What Twitter did does not violate the First Amendment of the Constitution," Aughenbaugh said, [reported NBC12](#). "The First Amendment applies to the government, and Twitter or Facebook, or any other social media platform, by and large, is a private sector actor and therefore the First Amendment does not apply."

"In joining or using the platform, you agree to certain conditions. And if you don't, the platform can ban you," he highlighted.

Nevertheless, Twitter's decision to permanently ban Trump's account has been followed by a [loss of some \\$5 billion in market value for the company](#).

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Photos: Teespring Pulls 'Camp Auschwitz' Merch From Site After Apparel Worn by Capitol City Rioter
by [Evan Craighead](#)

Teespring came under fire last week after the "Camp Auschwitz" hooded sweatshirt donned by a rioter in Washington, DC, was quickly identified and traced back to the online e-commerce platform's marketplace.

Teespring announced Monday that it would be discontinuing sales of a viral "Camp Auschwitz" design that caused "distress caused to communities and individuals alike."

The user-submitted design in question quickly rose to infamy last week after an unnamed man was wearing a hooded sweatshirt with the design while illegally trespassing in the US Capitol building.

The man in question was identified as Robert Keith Packer, a 56-year-old Virginia resident. However, it was a tweet from Twitter user @curtsf that brought the sweatshirt's vendor to the forefront. The design was pulled from the website hours later.

"As a creative platform, we try to allow and encourage our users freedom of expression. We have detection systems in place for problematic designs, but at times, bad characters evade these systems," [Teespring tweeted](#) Monday. "We're continuously striving to improve our systems and processes."

Teespring [also noted](#) in its social media statement that a donation - of an unspecified amount - will be made to Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and State Museum, which also alerted the business to the design.

"The shirts below commemorate Fr. Maximilian Kolbe who sacrificed his life and replaced a stranger in a starvation cell. Accepting "camp Auschwitz" shirts is disrespectful to him and to all other victims," the Auschwitz Memorial said in an early Sunday morning post.

While the merch is no longer available on the e-commerce platform, user @free_nac alleged that Teespring originally cited "freedom of speech" and its company policy when confronted about the design one month prior.

"Thanks for reaching out. Teespring strives to provide a safe environment for all of its users and buyers not only by adhering to strict Acceptable Use Policy (AUP), but by also being consistent in allowing freedom of speech / creativity," wrote 'Robert,' a Teespring employee. "While we don't necessarily agree with all the content on our site, as long as it does not violate our AUP policy [sic] or our terms of service, sellers have full creative rights when launching new designs. "We're sorry you're not a fan of this design, but we're sure you'll find some you love if you utilize the search tool on our home page," the email read.

However, [according to the platform's AUP](#), hate speech, harassment and related "campaigns that promote or glorify hatred toward people based on their age, race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability and religion" are not allowed.

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Trump Declares Emergency in Washington, DC Ahead of Inauguration - White House

WASHINGTON, January 11 (Sputnik) - US President Donald Trump has declared a state of emergency in the nation's capital ahead of President-elect Joe Biden's inauguration on January 20, the White House said in a press release.

"Today, President Donald J. Trump declared that an emergency exists in the District of Columbia and ordered Federal assistance to supplement the District's response efforts due to the emergency conditions resulting from the 59th Presidential Inauguration from January 11 to January 24, 2021," the release said on Monday.

Earlier on Monday, media reported that the FBI is warning that armed protests are being planned in all 50 US state capitals, including the US Capitol building, in the final days leading up to President-elect Joe Biden's inauguration on January 20.

The Department of Homeland Security and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) are authorized to help ensure public safety and to protect property as part of an effort to lessen the threat of a catastrophe, the release said.

On January 6, a group of Trump's loyalists stormed the US Capitol building, clashing with police, damaging property, seizing the inauguration stage and occupying the rotunda. The unrest took place after Trump urged his supporters to protest what he claims is a stolen election.

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Trump, Pence Affirm They Will Work Until End of Term at White House Meeting - Official

WASHINGTON, January 11 (Sputnik) - US President Donald Trump and Vice President Mike Pence during a meeting at the White House pledged to work together for the rest of their term, a senior US administration official said in a statement.

Pence and Trump's relationship soured after the vice president upheld Biden's victory during the certification process in Congress last week that was interrupted when the president's supporters stormed Capitol Hill. The meeting reportedly was the first one between Pence and Trump since the January 6 Capitol Hill riots, which Democrats have accused Trump of fueling.

"The President and the Vice President met this afternoon in the Oval Office," the official said after the meeting on Monday. "The Two had a good conversation, discussing the week ahead and reflecting on the last four years of the administration's work and accomplishments. They... pledged to continue the work on behalf of the country for the remainder of their term."

Congressional Democrats have introduced articles of impeachment against Trump for allegedly inciting an insurrection and have called on Pence to invoke constitutional authorities to remove Trump from power.

The readout added that Trump and Pence reiterated that the protesters that stormed the US Capitol building do not represent the 75 million Americans that voted for them in the 2020 US election.

On January 6, a group of Trump's loyalists stormed the US Capitol building, clashing with police, damaging property, seizing the inauguration stage and occupying the rotunda. The unrest took place after Trump urged his supporters to protest what he claims is a stolen election.

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Amazon Suspends Contributions to Lawmakers That Voted to 'Override' US Election Results

WASHINGTON, January 11 (Sputnik) - Amazon's political action committee (PAC) is suspending contributions to lawmakers that voted overturn the results of the US presidential election, a company spokeswoman said in a statement to Sputnik.

"Given the unacceptable attempt to undermine a legitimate democratic process, the Amazon PAC has suspended contributions to any Member of Congress who voted to override the results of the US Presidential election," the spokeswoman said on Monday.

The spokeswoman said the company will address its concerns directly with the members of Congress they previously supported and will review their responses before deciding whether to permanently terminate future PAC contributions to these lawmakers.

Earlier on Monday, Microsoft, American Express, Facebook, Google, AT&T and Airbnb in separate statements said they were putting political donations on hold. US media reports said most major US financial firms, including Goldman Sachs, JPMorgan Chase and Citigroup have initiated a similar freeze, pending review.

Republican Senators Josh Hawley, Ted Cruz, Tommy Tuberville, Cindy Hyde-Smith, Roger Marshall, John Kennedy, Cynthia Lummis and Rick Scott voted to overturn the results of the Electoral College that certified Joe Biden's presidential election win in November. Their attempt failed and Congress upheld the victory of Biden, a Democrat, who will be sworn in on January 20.

On January 6, a group of Trump's loyalists stormed the US Capitol building, clashing with police, damaging property, seizing the inauguration stage and occupying the rotunda. The unrest took place after Trump urged his supporters to protest what he claims is a stolen election.

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Pompeo to Visit Brussels for Talks With NATO Chief, Belgian Officials - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, January 11 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo will visit Brussels on Wednesday for security talks with Belgian officials and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, the Department of State said in a press release.

"Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo will travel to Brussels, Belgium, January 13-14, 2021, to reaffirm the deep and enduring partnership between the United States and Belgium and the unwavering U.S. support for NATO," the release said on Monday.

Pompeo will meet with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and Belgian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sophie Wilmes, the release said.

The release said Pompeo will discuss the importance of the Transatlantic partnership and adapting to new challenges.

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FBI Supporting Local Law Enforcement Ahead of Possible Armed Protests in US - Statement

WASHINGTON, January 11 (Sputnik) - The FBI is providing support to state, local and federal law enforcement agencies ahead of possible armed protests that may soon occur throughout the United States, the FBI said in a statement to Sputnik.

Earlier on Monday, media reported that the FBI is warning that armed protests are being planned in all 50 US state capitals in the final days leading up to President-elect Joe Biden's inauguration on January 20.

"The FBI is supporting our state, local, and federal law enforcement partners with maintaining public safety in the communities we serve," the statement said on Monday. "Our focus is not on peaceful protesters, but on those threatening their safety and the safety of other citizens with violence and destruction of property."

The FBI said it is gathering information to identify potential threats and sharing that information with its partners.

On January 6, a group of Trump's supporters stormed the US Capitol building, clashing with police, damaging property, seizing the inauguration stage and occupying the rotunda. The unrest took place after Trump urged his supporters to protest the legitimizing by Congress of what he claims was a stolen election.

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Wisconsin Governor Authorizes National Guard Ahead of Possible Unrest

WASHINGTON, January 11 (Sputnik) - Wisconsin Governor Tony Evers' office in a press release said he has activated the National Guard to help protect the state Capitol building ahead of a potential armed protest.

"Gov. Tony Evers today authorized the Wisconsin National Guard to support Wisconsin's Capitol Police," the release said on Monday. "Members of the Wisconsin National Guard will mobilize to state active duty to support safety and security efforts at the State Capitol in Madison."

Earlier on Monday, media reported that the FBI is warning that armed protests are being planned in all 50 US state capitals in the final days leading up to President-elect Joe Biden's inauguration on January 20. Wisconsin is one of the key battleground states where the Trump campaign and Republican party strongly contested President-elect Joe Biden's win in the US election.

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Alleged Capitol Raider With Pelosi's Lectern Charged, Released in Florida - Reports

WASHINGTON, January 11 (Sputnik) - A Florida man identified in a photograph as being the person carrying away US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's lectern was released on bail after being arrested and charged with three federal felony charges connected with the storming of the US Capitol, news reports said.

Thirty six-year-old Adam Johnson was released on Monday on a \$25,000 bond. The authorities imposed on Johnson a 9 p.m. to 6 a.m. curfew, a ban on firearms or weapons, and restricted travel except in the middle district of Florida and in Washington, DC for court-related issues, WFLA News in Tampa Bay reported on Monday evening.

Johnson due to appear in court on January 19, the report also said.

Johnson was arrested on Friday on a federal warrant and was jailed in Pinellas County, WFLA reported earlier. He was charged with three felony counts of entering a restricted building without authorization, theft of government property and violent entry and disorderly conduct on Capitol grounds, the report said.

Johnson allegedly participated in the storming of the Capitol on Wednesday in which supporters of President Donald Trump, claiming the November 3 national election was stolen, broke into the building, the report added.

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White House Counsel, Attorney General Warned Trump Not to Pardon Himself - Reports

WASHINGTON, January 11 (Sputnik) - At least two senior members of the outgoing US administration advised President Donald Trump to avoid pardoning himself, CNN reported. Former US Attorney General William Barr conveyed his position to Trump last month before his resignation, the report said without providing details when another official - White House counsel Pat Cipollone provided similar advice to the President, the report said on Monday, citing multiple sources.

Two sources expressed doubts that Vice President Mike Pence would issue a pardon to Trump because he was disappointed with the president for his behavior, referring to Trump's fiery speech before the riots on Capitol Hill.

Thousands of Trump supporters stormed the US Capitol building on January 6 - as Congress was trying to certify the presidential election results - after Trump urged his followers to keep fighting to prevent the election from being stolen.

Trump recently raised the idea of pardoning himself and his close relatives, according to the report. The president has the power to pardon himself but the self-pardon would only extend to federal crimes, the report noted.

Trump is expected to provide additional pardons before leaving office on January 20, the report added.

Five people died and more than 100 have been arrested in connection with the riots, according to a tally by The New York Times.

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Acting US Homeland Security Secretary Wolf Resigning on Monday - Letter

WASHINGTON, January 11 (Sputnik) - Acting US Homeland Security Secretary Chad Wolf said in a letter to colleagues that he has decide to resign from his post later in the day.

"Effective at 11:59 p.m. today, I am stepping down as your Acting Secretary," Wolf said in the letter on Monday. "I am saddened to take this step, as it was my intention to serve the Department until the end of the Administration."

On Wednesday, President Donald Trump withdrew Wolf's nomination to be Homeland Security chief hours after he publicly urged the president to denounce the violence on Capitol Hill. Wolf said his decision to resign is due to recent events, including the ongoing court rulings regarding the validity of his authority as acting Secretary.

FEMA Administrator Pete Gaynor will serve as Acting Homeland Security Secretary for the remainder of Trump's term in office, Wolf said.

Wolf's resignation comes nine days before President-elect Joe Biden is inaugurated on January 20 and in the wake of unrest at Capitol Hill last Wednesday.

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Corporate America Suspends Political Donations After Attack on US Capitol

WASHINGTON, January 11 (Sputnik) - Corporations across America, including Big Tech companies Microsoft, Facebook and Google, announced that they were pulling the plug on all political donations after last week's attack on the US Capitol by a mob made up of President Donald Trump's supporters.

"Microsoft's political action committee decided last Friday that it will not make any political donations until after it assesses the implications of last week's events," Microsoft said in a statement on Monday similarly worded to those issued by other US businesses. "The PAC regularly pauses its donations in the first quarter of a new Congress, but it will take additional steps this year to consider these recent events and consult with employees."

Some companies, including credit card giant American Express, said they were reevaluating political contributions due to the actions of lawmakers who tried to prevent President-elect Joe Biden's transition to power.

"Last week's attempts by some congressional members to subvert the presidential election results and disrupt the peaceful transition of power do not align with our American Express Blue Box values; therefore, the AXP PAC will not support them," Amex Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Stephen J. Squeri said in a statement.

Aside from Microsoft and Amex, Facebook, Google, AT&T and Aibnb in statements said they were putting political donations on hold. US media reports said most major US financial firms, including Goldman Sachs, JPMorgan Chase and Citigroup have initiated a similar freeze, pending review.

Shock and outrage has seized the United States since Trump's supporters attacked the Capitol last Wednesday to try and block Congress' affirmation of the Electoral College vote for Biden. Five people, including a policeman on duty and a former woman air force veteran who supported Trump, died in the riots.

Later on Wednesday, Republican Senators Josh Hawley, Ted Cruz, Tommy Tuberville, Cindy Hyde-Smith, Roger Marshall, John Kennedy, Cynthia Lummis and Rick Scott voted to overturn the results of the Electoral College that certified Biden's presidential election win in November. Their attempt failed and Congress upheld the victory of Biden, a Democrat, who will be sworn in on January 20.

Trump, who has refused to concede to Biden since the election, is under pressure now to resign or be forced out of office before his term ends in the next nine days.

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Facebook Says Deleting 'Stop the Steal' Contents After Unrest at US Capitol

WASHINGTON, January 11 (Sputnik) - Facebook said that following the unrest in Washington, DC last week, it has decided to remove "Stop the Steal" contents that promote US President Donald Trump's allegations he won the 2020 election but was deprived of victory by his political opponents due to a massive fraud.

"We are now removing content containing the phrase "Stop the Steal" under our Coordinating Harm policy from Facebook and Instagram. We removed the original Stop the Steal group in November and have continued to remove Pages, groups and events that violate any of our policies, including calls for violence," Facebook said in a statement on Monday.

Facebook added that it has already removed a significant number of posts and it may take some time to scale up the enforcement of its decision.

"We've been allowing robust conversations related to the election outcome and that will continue. But with continued attempts to organize events against the outcome of the US presidential election that can lead to violence, and use of the term by those involved in Wednesday's violence in [Washington] DC, we're taking this additional step in the lead up to the inauguration," Facebook said.

The company earlier suspended indefinitely Trump's account and said that it is keeping a pause on all advertisements in the United States about politics or elections.

On January 6, a group of Trump's loyalists stormed the US Capitol building, clashing with police, damaging property, seizing the inauguration stage and occupying the rotunda. The unrest took place after Trump urged his supporters to protest what he claims is a stolen election.

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Pompeo Says VOA Worker Protest to His Speech 'Morally Wrong'

WASHINGTON, January 11 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said opposition to his speech before the US government-funded Voice of America (VOA) broadcaster is morally wrong and at odds with the broadcaster's direct responsibilities.

Ahead of Monday's address, the Washington Post reported that VOA employees protested the US' top diplomat's speech, reportedly, decrying it as "propaganda."

"I heard some VOA employees didn't want me to speak here today," Pompeo said. "They didn't want the voice of American diplomacy to be broadcast on the Voice of America... this kind of censorial instinct is dangerous, its morally wrong, indeed its against your statutory mandate here at VOA."

Pompeo added that censorship, "wokeness" and political correctness are the tenets of authoritarianism, citing the recent banishment of US President Donald Trump – accused of inciting unrest at the US Capitol Building – and his supporters from social media platforms, including Twitter and Facebook, has no place at the broadcaster.

The Voice of America is a broadcaster funded by the US government and overseen by the US Agency for Global Media (USAGM), which also runs Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and other surrogate media outlets. Part of VOA's charter says the agency must "present the policies of the United States," clearly and effectively.

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Gorillas at California Safari Park Test Positive for Coronavirus Virus - San Diego Zoo

WASHINGTON, January 11 (Sputnik) - Gorillas at a California safari park run by the San Diego Zoo have tested positive for the novel coronavirus in the first confirmed case of such an infection, the zoo authorities announced in a news release on Monday.

"Members of the Gorilla Troop at the San Diego Zoo Safari Park have tested positive for SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19," the release said.

The San Diego Zoo authorities said that two of the gorillas began coughing last Wednesday, prompting them to initiate the process of testing fecal samples at the California Animal Health and Food Safety Laboratory System.

"On January 8, the preliminary tests detected the presence of the virus in the gorilla troop. The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Veterinary Services Laboratories (NVSL) confirmed the positive results on Monday," the release said.

The test results confirmed the presence of the novel coronavirus in some of the gorillas and do not rule out that the virus may be present in other members of the troop, the release added.

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Trump, Pence Biographies on US State Dept. Website Show Their Terms Ended Monday

WASHINGTON, January 11 (Sputnik) - President Donald Trump's and Vice President Mike Pence's biographies listed on the State Department website show their terms in office ended on Monday.

"Donald J. Trump's terms ended on 2021-01-11 19:40:41," Trump's biography read on Monday afternoon.

US media reported that a disgruntled State Department staffer made the changes.

The State Department did not immediately respond to Sputnik's request for comment.

Trump and Pence will end their terms on January 20 when the administration transfers power to the incoming administration of President-elect Joe Biden.

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US State Department Designates Cuba as State Sponsor of Terrorism - Pompeo

WASHINGTON, January 11 (Sputnik) - The United States has added Cuba to its list of State Sponsors of Terrorism, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced in a statement.

"The State Department has designated Cuba as a State Sponsor of Terrorism for repeatedly providing support for acts of international terrorism in granting safe harbor to terrorists," Pompeo said on Monday.

Pompeo explained that the latest action subjects Cuba to sanctions that penalize persons and countries engaging in certain trade with Cuba, restricts US foreign aid, prohibits defense exports and sales as well as imposes certain controls on exports of dual use items.

"The United States will continue to support the Cuban people in their desire for a democratic government and respect for human rights, including freedom of religion, expression, and association," Pompeo said. "Until these rights and freedoms are respected, we will continue to hold the regime accountable."

Pompeo pointed out that the designation will once again hold Cuba accountable and send a message that it must cease its support for international terrorism.

"For decades, the Cuban government has fed, housed, and provided medical care for murderers, bomb-makers and hijackers, while many Cubans go hungry, homeless, and without basic medicine. Members of the National Liberation Army (ELN), a US-designated Foreign Terrorist Organization, traveled to Havana to conduct peace talks with the Colombian government in 2017," Pompeo said.

The secretary of state pointed out that Cuba has refused Colombia's requests to extradite ten ELN leaders living in Havana after the group claimed responsibility for the January 2019 bombing of a Bogota police academy that killed 22 people and injured more than 87 others. Pompeo noted that Cuba harbors a number of US fugitives, including Joanne Chesimard, who was placed on the FBI's Most Wanted Terrorists List for executing New Jersey State trooper Werner Foerster in 1973 and Ishmael LaBeet who convicted of killing eight people in the US Virgin Islands in 1972.

The Trump administration sought to designate Cuba before the November 3 US presidential election, but was unable to do so given the lengthy process, the report noted.

Now the administration is trying to complete the process just days ahead of President-elect Joseph Biden's inauguration. Biden has expressed an intention to revive the policy of easing economic and other restrictions on Cuba – a policy advanced during the Obama administration when the two countries normalized bilateral relations.

Current US president Donald Trump reversed Obama's policy shortly after assuming office in 2016 by restricting travel to Cuba, boosting the US economic embargo against the country and imposing sanctions on Cuban officials.

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US to Start Security Lockdown in Downtown Washington for Biden Inauguration Wednesday

WASHINGTON, January 11 (Sputnik) - The US government will start a security lockdown in downtown Washington, DC beginning on Wednesday for President-elect Joe Biden's inauguration, six days earlier than previously planned, Acting Homeland Security Secretary Chad Wolf said in a statement.

"In light of events of the past week and the evolving security landscape leading up to the inauguration and at the recommendation of Secret Service Director James Murray, I have instructed the US Secret Service to begin the National Special Security Event operations for the 2021 Inauguration effective Wednesday, January 13th instead of January 19th," Wolf said on Monday.

Wolf also said the Department of Homeland Security's federal, state and local partners will continue to coordinate their plans and position resources for the inauguration event.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, January 12 (Sputnik) -

POLITICAL UNREST IN US

* The FBI is warning that armed protests are being planned in all 50 US state capitols in the final days up to President-elect Joe Biden's inauguration, ABC News reported, citing a bulletin sent out by the agency.

* Washington, DC has asked the federal authorities to cancel all permits for public gatherings in the US capital through the presidential inauguration following last week's Capitol unrest, Mayor Muriel Bowser told reporters.

TRUMP IMPEACHMENT

- * US House Democrats have formally introduced an article of impeachment against Trump accusing him of inciting an insurrection on Capitol Hill last week, Congressman Ted Lieu said on Monday.
- * US House Republicans blocked an attempt by the chamber's Democrats to pass a resolution calling on Vice President Mike Pence to invoke the 25th Amendment to remove Trump from office.
- * The US House of Representatives will make another attempt to urge Vice President Mike Pence to invoke the 25th Amendment to remove President Donald Trump from office, Speaker Nancy Pelosi said in a statement.

INTERNATIONAL TALKS ON NAGORNO-KARABAKH

- * Leaders of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Russia signed a statement on the development of the Karabakh region, which became the site of a military conflict late last year, Russian President Vladimir Putin said Monday.
- * A working group of Russia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan on the development of the Nagorno-Karabakh region will have its first meeting before the end of January, a statement of the three countries' leaders said.
- * The work on the exchange of prisoners, taken captive during the Karabakh conflict, will continue, as the issue remains unresolved after trilateral talks in Moscow, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said.
- * Over 48,000 people have returned to their homes in Karabakh after the ceasefire, Putin said.

US DESIGNATES CUBA AS SPONSOR OF TERRORISM

- * The United States has added Cuba to its list of State sponsors of Terrorism, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced in a statement on Monday.

CORONAVIRUS VACCINE

- * Palestine became the first country in the Middle East to register Russia's Sputnik V vaccine against the coronavirus, head of the Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF) Kirill Dmitriev said on Monday.
- * Russia research center Vector sequenced the UK strain of the coronavirus from a patient sample in December and is still studying it, the press service of the Russia healthcare watchdog said.
- * South African President Cyril Ramaphosa said his country expected to receive at least 20 million doses of a coronavirus vaccine within the next six months.

US PLANS TO DESIGNATE HOUTHIES AS TERROT GROUP

- * The US State Department intends to notify Congress of its plans to designate Yemen's Houthis as a terrorist organization, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said in a statement on Monday.
- * The Yemeni government on Monday expressed its strong support toward the United States' plans to label the Shia rebel Houthi movement as a foreign terrorist organization, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said.

* The United Nations is concerned that the US decision to design Yemen's Houthi opposition movement as terrorists will have detrimental consequences on the political process in that country, UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said.

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Internet Provider in US State of Idaho Blocks Facebook, Twitter After Trump Ban - Reports

WASHINGTON, January 11 (Sputnik) - An internet provider in the US state of North Dakota has blocked Twitter and Facebook from its service after customers requested them to do so in protest of President Donald Trump being banned from the platforms last week, CBS-affiliate television station KREM2 reported on Monday.

The report said the internet provider Your T1 WIFI provides services in northern Idaho and has received numerous requests from customers to block Twitter and Facebook in protest of the social media platforms censoring Trump and his supporters.

The ban will go into effect on Wednesday and will only apply to customers that requested the social media websites be banned from their service.

Social media companies have been removing accounts and content that incites violence similar to the deadly siege on Capitol Hill on Wednesday.

Trump urged his supporters to march on Capitol Hill to challenge Joe Biden's victory in the presidential election.

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Nearly 75% of US Voters Believe Democracy 'Under Threat' - Poll

WASHINGTON, January 11 (Sputnik) - Almost three quarters of US voters in the wake of last week's Capitol Hill riots believe that democracy in the United States is under threat, a Quinnipiac University survey revealed on Monday.

"Following last week's mob attack on the US Capitol during a joint session of Congress... nearly three-quarters (74 percent) of voters say democracy in the United States is under threat," the pollster said.

A majority of voters, 56 percent, told Quinnipiac that they held President Donald Trump responsible for the storming of the Capitol, the release said - including 94% of Democrats and 17% of Republicans.

Some 52% say Trump should be removed from office, including 89% of Democrats and 10% of Republicans.

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US House to Consider Trump's Impeachment Wednesday - Schedule

WASHINGTON, January 11 (Sputnik) - The US House of Representatives plans to meet on Wednesday to consider impeaching President Donald Trump for 'incitement of insurrection' at the Capitol, according to a schedule update released on Monday.

"On Wednesday, January 13, 2021, the House is expected to meet at 9:00 a.m. [2:00 p.m. GMT] for legislative business. The House is expected to consider Articles of Impeachment," the update said.

On Tuesday, the House will consider a resolution calling on Vice President Mike Pence "to convene and mobilize the principal officers to activate section 4 of the 25th Amendment" - with the purpose of removing Trump from office.

Democrats have said that if Pence does not take action, they will seek to impeach Trump. On Monday, they formally introduced an article of impeachment against the incumbent, accusing him of inciting an insurrection on Capitol Hill last week.

On January 6, a group of Trump supporters stormed the US Capitol building, clashing with police, damaging property, seizing the inauguration stage and occupying the rotunda. The unrest took place after Trump urged his supporters to protest what he claims is a stolen election. Following the unrest, Trump has been blocked on all major social media platforms.

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"The State Department has designated Cuba as a State Sponsor of Terrorism for repeatedly providing support for acts of international terrorism in granting safe harbor to terrorists," Pompeo said.

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US House Democrats Introduce Measure to Censure Congressman Brooks Over Capitol Riot

WASHINGTON, January 11 (Sputnik) - US House Democrats have introduced a resolution that would censure Congressman Mo Brooks for allegedly inciting violence against his colleagues in last week's riot on Capitol Hill.

"Today, Representatives Tom Malinowski and Debbie Wasserman Schultz introduced a resolution censuring Representative Mo Brooks (AL-5) for inciting violence against his fellow members of Congress as part of last week's assault on the United States Capitol," the release said.

On Wednesday, Trump supporters stormed the Capitol building to disrupt lawmakers as they were verifying President-elect Joe Biden's victory in the 2020 presidential election.

The release said Brooks spoke to the pro-Trump crowd at a rally near the White House on Wednesday, telling them to "start taking down names and kicking ass."

After the rally, tens of thousands of Trump supporters marched to Capitol Hill to protest the election results. Capitol police said thousands of the protesters stormed the US Capitol, some wielding weapons such as metal pipes and chemical irritants.

Five people died in connection with the riots including a Capitol police officer.

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US to Deploy Up to 15,000 National Guard Troops for Biden Inauguration - General

WASHINGTON, January 11 (Sputnik) - The US authorities will deploy up to 15,000 National Guard troops in Washington, DC to ensure security during President-elect Joe Biden inauguration on January 20, National Guard Bureau Chief Gen. Daniel Hokanson said in a statement on Monday.

"We have received support requests from the Secret Service, Capitol Police, and Park Police, and have been authorized to provide up to 15,000 Guard members to meet current and future inauguration support requirements," Hokanson said.

At present, the National Guard has deployed about 6,200 troops in support of the civilian authorities, he said.

"To date, our troops have been requested to support security, logistics, liaison, and communication missions," Hokanson added.

On Wednesday, a large group of Trump supporters stormed the Capitol building in a bid to protest the lawmakers for certifying the presidential election results. The Trump supporters clashed with police and damaged property before seizing the rotunda and inauguration stage. The event was the most significant breach of the US Capitol grounds since the British set fire to it in 1814.

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Biden Gets Second Coronavirus Vaccine Dose on Live TV

WASHINGTON, January 11 (Sputnik) - US President-elect Joe Biden on Monday received the second dose of the coronavirus vaccine on live television and promised accelerated inoculation campaign once he assumes office.

Biden was administered the second shot of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine in his hometown of Wilmington, Delaware, three weeks after taking the first injection.

"My number one priority is getting vaccines to people's arms just like we did today as rapidly as we can. We are working on that program now," he said.

Biden said he will make an announcement on the measures to counter the coronavirus pandemic on Thursday.

"From three to four thousand people a day dying is just beyond the pale. It's just wrong. And we can do a lot to change it," Biden said.

Two coronavirus vaccines have been authorized for inoculations in the United States, produce by Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna.

Several US public officials, including Vice President Mike Pence, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, chose get vaccinated publicly in order to promote the vaccination campaign.

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Situation Remains Calm Near US Capitol Building, Yet People Remember January 6 Riots

WASHINGTON, January 11 (Sputnik) - The situation near the building that houses both chambers of US Congress in Washington, DC remains calm in the wake of last week's riots with only tourists and a few film crews in the vicinity, a Sputnik correspondent reports.

Preparations for the inauguration of President-elect Joe Biden, scheduled for January 20, continue. However, the FBI is warning that armed protests are being planned in all 50 US state capitols in the final days up to Biden's inauguration, ABC News reported on Monday, citing a bulletin sent out by the agency.

National Guard officers stand behind a metal fence that was put up here after the riots in the Congress building last week. They are all unarmed. Passers-by sometimes stop to have a few words with them.

There are several police cars not far from the Capitol, but there are no personnel on the streets. Meanwhile, people are carrying more and more flowers to the posters with the name of the policeman who died during the riots - a kind of memorial in front of the Capitol.

"Officer Sicknick, thank you!," along with "Rest in Peace, Defender of the US Capitol and Democracy," the captions on posters read. At the same time, posters with the names of four deceased protesters at the congress have disappeared.

On Monday, there are no supporters of outgoing US President Donald Trump near the Capitol. But there is a supporter of impeachment to Trump, who introduced himself as Bill Zouaki from Oregon. He is holding a sign that says "Impeachment."

"He [Trump] should have been impeached within 24 hours after what happened here," says Bill. In his opinion, Trump is to blame for inciting rebellion.

Last week, Twitter warned that it has seen plans for future armed protests circulating on and off its platform, including a second attack on the US Capitol and state capitol buildings on January 17.

On Wednesday, a large group of President Donald Trump's supporters stormed the Capitol building in a bid to prevent lawmakers from certifying the presidential election results. Trump supporters - some of which were armed with metal pipes, chemical irritants, and other weapons - clashed with police and damaged property before seizing the rotunda and inauguration stage. The event was the most significant breach of the US Capitol grounds since the British set fire to it in 1814. Following the unrest, Trump has been blocked on all major social media platforms. Congressional Democrats on Monday took the first steps to try to remove Trump from office immediately. The House of Representatives is expected to pass a resolution this week urging Vice President Mike Pence to invoke the 25th Amendment to remove Trump from power. However, if that fails then House Democrats will pursue impeachment charges against the president for allegedly inciting an insurrection at the US Capitol.

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New York to Create 1,000-Strong Public Health Corps for COVID Vaccination - Cuomo

NEW YORK, January 11 (Sputnik) - New York State seeks to create a Public Health Corps of 1,000 medical fellows to coordinate a state-wide coronavirus vaccination, Governor Andrew Cuomo said in a live-streamed briefing on Monday.

"New York will hire 1,000 health corps fellows who will agree to serve for one year," Cuomo said. "They will be trained to facilitate a statewide coordinated vaccination operation and do it safely and quickly in every part of the state."

Cuomo said New York will also train and certify 100,000 health emergency volunteers for rapid testing "that not only saves lives but is also a key to the state's economic reopening plan."

Five new coronavirus vaccination centers opened in New York City this week in the latest effort to accelerate the sluggish pace that has dogged the rollout in the city.

Cuomo said a month ago the state could remain in danger from the pandemic at least until June, even with vaccinations available for the coronavirus.

At the peak of the coronavirus outbreak in April, New York State reported about 10,000 positive cases a day. It also had about 18,000 people in hospital and faced roughly 800 deaths a day from the virus.

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UN Worried US Designating Houthis to Have 'Detrimental Impact' on Yemen Political Process

UNITED NATIONS, January 11 (Sputnik) - The United Nations is concerned that the US decision to designate Yemen's Houthi opposition movement as terrorists will have detrimental consequences on the political process in that country, UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said in a press briefing on Monday.

"We are also concerned that the designation may have a detrimental impact on efforts to resume the political process in Yemen, as well as to polarize even more the positions of the parties to the conflict," Dujarric said.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced earlier that the State Department intends to notify Congress of its plans to designate the Houthi movement as a terrorist organization and brand three of its leaders - Abdul Malik al-Houthi, Abd al-Khaliq Badr al-Din al-Houthi and Abdullah Yahya al Hakim - as Specially Designated Global Terrorists.

Dujarric also said that the decision will likely have repercussions on the largest in the world humanitarian operation, risking to slide Yemen into famine.

"The growing risk of famine in Yemen underlines the imperative for the US to swiftly grant the necessary licenses and exemptions to ensure that principled humanitarian assistance can continue to reach all people... without disruption," the spokesman said.

Earlier in the day, a senior member of Yemen's Houthi-run Supreme Political Council, Mohammed Ali Al-Houthi, said, commenting on the US plans, that the rebels have the right to respond to such action.

A civil war between the Yemeni government forces, led by President Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi, and the Houthi movement has been ongoing since 2014. The Saudi-led coalition entered the conflict on the side of the government in 2015, after the rebels made significant gains during the early days of clashes. The movement controls the capital of Sanaa and large areas in northern and western Yemen.

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UN Seeks \$1.3Mln to Deliver Life-Saving Aid to Afghanistan Throughout 2021 - Spokesman

UNITED NATIONS, January 11 (Sputnik) - The United Nations aims to collect \$1.3 billion to provide humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan, where the number of people in need has skyrocketed to more than 16 million this year, UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said in a press briefing on Monday.

"This year, the UN and humanitarian partners will seek \$1.3 billion to assist over 16 million people with life-saving aid," Dujarric said. "This is up from the target of 2.3 million people just four years ago - a huge increase in people that need aid."

In 2021, nearly half of the population will require humanitarian support due to the combination of the ongoing conflict, natural disasters, poverty and the COVID-19 pandemic, Dujarric said. Some 5.5 million of those in need are on the brink of famine and will depend on the international community's ability to mobilize sufficient funds, Dujarric added.

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US Congresswoman Says Contracted COVID-19 in Capitol Unrest

WASHINGTON, January 11 (Sputnik) - US Congresswoman Bonnie Watson Coleman said on Monday that she contracted coronavirus after sheltering with maskless colleagues during last week's storm of the Capitol by President Donald Trump's loyalists.

"Following the events of Wednesday, including sheltering with several colleagues who refused to wear masks, I decided to take a Covid test. I have tested positive," Coleman, who is 75 years old, tweeted.

According to her statement, the congresswoman believes that she was exposed during "protective isolation" as a number of people, who also sought refuge from "insurrectionist riots", reportedly ignored instructions to wear face masks in a confined space.

Coleman said that she is resting at home experiencing "mild, cold-like symptoms."

US lawmakers were evacuated last Wednesday when thousands of Trump supporters violently stormed the Capitol building in a bid to prevent Congress from certifying the presidential election results. They attacked police with metal pipes, chemical irritants, and other weapons, and damaged property before seizing the rotunda and inauguration stage. The attack, which came after Trump urged his supporters to keep fighting to overturn Joe Biden's win, marked the most significant breach of US Capitol grounds since the British set fire to it in 1814.

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FBI Warns of Armed Protests at All US State Capitols From January 16-20 - Reports

WASHINGTON, January 11 (Sputnik) - The FBI is warning that armed protests are being planned in all 50 US state capitols in the final days up to President-elect Joe Biden's inauguration, ABC News reported on Monday, citing a bulletin sent out by the agency.

"As of 10 January, armed protests are being planned at all 50 state capitols from 16 January through at least 20 January, and at the US Capitol from 17 January through 20 January," the FBI bulletin said, as quoted by ABC.

Last week, Twitter warned that it has seen plans for future armed protests circulating on and off its platform, including a second attack on the US Capitol and state capitol buildings on January 17.

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UN Worried US Designating Houthies to Have 'Detrimental Impact' on Yemen Political Process

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Guterres Seeks 2nd Term as UN Secretary-General - Letter to Security Council

UNITED NATIONS, January 11 (Sputnik) - UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said in a letter to the Security Council President on Monday that he seeks to be leading the organization for a second five-year term.

"As my first term of office as Secretary-General of the United Nations expires at the end of this year, I wish to inform you that I am available to serve a second term as Secretary-General of the United Nations, if that will be the will of member states," Guterres said in a letter seen by Sputnik.

United Nations spokesman Stephen Dujarric confirmed that Guterres also delivered a letter of similar content to the President of the UN General Assembly earlier in the day.

The Secretary-General is appointed by the UN General Assembly upon the recommendation of the Security Council. The UN chief's candidature could be vetoed by any of the five permanent member states - China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Guterres assumed office on January 1, 2017.

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US Capital Requests Cancellation of Public Gatherings Through January 24 - Mayor

WASHINGTON, January 11 (Sputnik) - Washington, DC has asked the federal authorities to cancel all permits for public gatherings in the US capital beyond the presidential inauguration set for January 20 following the unrest on Capitol Hill last week, Mayor Muriel Bowser told reporters on Monday.

"I am requesting that the Secretary of the Department of Interior cancel any and all Public Gathering Permits in the District of Columbia and deny any applications for Public Gathering Permits during the period of January 11-24, 2021," Bowser said in a press briefing.

Bowser encouraged Americans to participate "virtually" in inauguration of President Joe Biden.

"The transition of power happens when Joe Biden and [Vice President-elect] Kamala Harris are sworn in. And that event in my view should be public," Bowser said.

As Trump supporters, who refuse to acknowledge the current president's election defeat, can return to the capital, Bowser also requested the FBI to provide daily intelligence and threat briefings through January 24 to all law enforcement entities operating in Washington, DC.

"We have requested that the President [Donald Trump] declare a pre-Emergency Declaration for the District of Columbia. This is necessary because this Inauguration poses several unprecedented challenges that exceed the scope of our traditional processes, including the COVID-19 pandemic and the January 6 domestic terror attack on the United States Capitol," she said.

Bowser also asked the departments of Homeland Security, Defense and Justice to establish "a security and federal force deployment plan for all federal property which will ensure the Metropolitan Police Department's ability to focus on its local mission in the District's eight wards."

The Defense Department promised earlier to make available 6,200 National Guard troops from several states available for Washington, DC for around a month.

On Wednesday, a large group of Trump supporters stormed the Capitol building in a bid to protest the lawmakers for certifying the presidential election results. The Trump supporters clashed with police and damaged property before seizing the rotunda and inauguration stage. The event was the most significant breach of the US Capitol grounds since the British set fire to it in 1814.

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Top US Lawmaker Urges Reversal of Houthis Terrorist Designation

WASHINGTON, January 11 (Sputnik) - Chairman of the US House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee Gregory Meeks called on Monday for "a speedy reversal" of the outgoing administration's decision to blacklist Yemen's Houthi opposition movement as terrorists. "The designation of the Houthi organization in Yemen as a foreign terrorist organization is short-sighted and endangers the lives of the Yemeni people," Meeks said in a statement. "I urge a speedy reversal of this designation and an urgent return to the negotiation table. Only a political solution will solve this conflict, prevent widespread famine, and cure this humanitarian crisis."

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced earlier that the State Department intends to notify Congress of its plans to designate Houthis as a terrorist organization and brand three of its leaders - Abdul Malik al-Houthi, Abd al-Khaliq Badr al-Din al-Houthi and Abdullah Yahya al Hakim - as Specially Designated Global Terrorists.

"No solution in Yemen will be sustainable unless the Houthis are involved. By designating the Houthi organization as a foreign terrorist organization, the Trump Administration is only pushing a political solution to the conflict further out of reach," Meeks said.

He argued that the designation could also complicate international humanitarian and environmental efforts in the war-torn country, including repairs of the FSO Safer tanker, which has been moored off the coast of Yemen since 2015 and is at risk of leaking or exploding

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US House to Debate Legislation Urging Pence to Remove Trump - Speaker Pelosi

WASHINGTON, January 11 (Sputnik) - The US House of Representatives will make another attempt to urge Vice President Mike Pence to invoke the 25th Amendment to remove President Donald Trump from office, Speaker Nancy Pelosi said in a statement on Monday.

"The House will next take up the [Congressman Jamie] Raskin legislation in regular order to call upon the Vice President to activate the 25th Amendment to remove the President. We are further calling on the Vice President to respond within 24 hours after passage," Pelosi said in the statement.

Earlier in the day, House Republicans blocked an attempt by Democrats to pass the resolution with a swift vote by unanimous consent, which means lawmakers will first have to go through several procedural steps before the measure can be passed.

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American Express Cuts Off Political Donations to Senators Who Tried Block Biden Transition

WASHINGTON, January 11 (Sputnik) - Credit card company American Express said on Monday it will discontinue political donations to lawmakers who tried to subvert the certification of President-elect Joe Biden's election win and transition to power.

"The AXP PAC has not contributed to Senators who voted in favor of the objections to certain states' Electoral College results," American Express' Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Stephen Squeri said in a statement, referring to its Political Action Committee. "Last week's attempts by some congressional members to subvert the presidential election results and disrupt the peaceful transition of power do not align with our American Express Blue Box values; therefore, the AXP PAC will not support them."

Republican Senators Josh Hawley, Ted Cruz, Rick Scott and three others voted on Wednesday to overturn the results of the Electoral College that certified Biden's presidential election win in November. Their attempt failed and Congress upheld the victory of Biden, a Democrat, who will be sworn in on January 20.

The senators' actions came despite shock and outrage across the United States for a riot earlier on Wednesday at the Capitol building by Republican president Donald Trump's supporters, who were also trying to block Congress' affirmation of the Electoral College.

Trump, who has refused to concede to Biden since the November election, is under pressure now to resign or be forced out of office before his term ends in the next nine days.

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UN Rights Experts Call on Biden Administration to Close Guantanamo Prison - Statement

UNITED NATIONS, January 11 (Sputnik) - Experts from the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights issued a statement on Monday calling on the incoming US administration of President-elect Joe Biden to close the Guantanamo Bay detention center. "We appeal to the US authorities to prosecute, in full compliance with human rights law, the individuals held at Guantanamo Bay or, alternatively, immediately release or repatriate them while respecting the principle of non-refoulement," the experts said. "With a new administration coming into office in the United States and as we approach the 20th anniversary of 9/11, Guantanamo must finally be closed forever."

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US House Democrats Introduce Article to Impeach Trump Over Capitol Hill Siege

WASHINGTON, January 11 (Sputnik) - US House Democrats have formally introduced an article of impeachment against President Donald Trump, accusing him of inciting an insurrection on Capitol Hill last week, Congressman Ted Lieu said in a statement on Monday.

"The Article of Impeachment: incitement to Insurrection, drafted by Rep David Cicilline, Rep Raskin, me and House Judiciary staff, has now been formally introduced at the House pro forma session today," Lieu said in the statement.

Also on Monday, US House Republicans an attempt by Democrats to pass a resolution calling on Vice President Mike Pence to invoke the 25th Amendment to remove President Donald Trump from office.

The Democrats asked the chamber to bring the resolution to a swift vote by unanimous consent, but Republicans objected to the move, meaning that lawmakers will first have to go through several procedural steps before the measure can be passed.

Democrats have said that if Pence does not take action to remove Trump, they will seek to impeach him for inciting insurrection at the Capitol.

On January 6, a group of Trump supporters stormed the US Capitol building, clashing with police, damaging property, seizing the inauguration stage and occupying the rotunda. The unrest took place after Trump urged his supporters to protest what he claims is a stolen election. Following the unrest, Trump has been blocked on all major social media platforms.

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Washington Monument to Be Closed Through January 24 Due to Protester Threats- Park Service

WASHINGTON, January 11 (Sputnik) - The Washington Monument will remain closed for visitors through at least January 24 over threats made by the protesters who took part in the January 6 unrest at the US Capitol, the National Park Service said in a release on Monday.

"Pursuant to 36 CFR § 1.5(a)(1) the National Mall and Memorial Parks is implementing temporary closures of National Park Service public facilities, parking areas and roadways in response to credible threats to visitors and park resources," the release said. "Groups involved in the January 6, 2021, riots at the US Capitol continue to threaten to disrupt the 59th presidential inauguration on January 20, 2021."

The NPS explained that the threats concern the set up and execution of the inaugural events on January 20, which take place in several park areas.

"In response, the National Park Service will suspend tours of the Washington Monument beginning January 11, 2021 through January 24, 2021 and may institute temporary closures of

public access to roadways, parking areas and restrooms within the National Mall and Memorial Parks if conditions warrant, to protect public safety and park resources," the release said. The NPS also pointed out that the closures may be prolonged if the conditions persist, and conversely will reopen areas when it determines that the conditions of concern are no longer present.

On January 6, supporters of President Donald Trump stormed the US Capitol in a bid to protest lawmakers for certifying the presidential election results, some of which the protesters believe are invalid. The protesters clashed with police, damaged property, seized the inauguration stage and occupied the rotunda inside the Capitol building.

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US to Put Back Cuba on State Sponsor of Terrorism List - Reports

WASHINGTON, January 11 (Sputnik) - The United States will put back Cuba on its list of states designated for supporting terrorism, Bloomberg reported on Monday citing two senior State Department officials.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo is expected to designate Cuba for continuing to harbor US fugitives and for ignoring Colombia's requests to extradite National Liberation Army members responsible for killing more than 20 people in 2019, the report said.

The Trump administration sought to designate Cuba before the November 3 US presidential election, but was unable to do so given the lengthy process, the report noted.

Now the administration is trying to complete the process just days ahead of President-elect Joseph Biden's inauguration. Biden has expressed an intention to revive the policy of easing economic and some other restrictions with Cuba, the report said.

The policy was advanced during the Obama administration when the two countries normalized bilateral relations, easing many restrictions on exchanges between them.

Current US president Donald Trump reversed Obama's policy shortly after assuming office in 2016 by restricting travel to Cuba, boosting the US economic embargo against the country and imposing sanctions on Cuban officials.

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US House Republicans Block Democrats' Resolution Urging Pence to Remove Trump From Office

WASHINGTON, January 11 (Sputnik) - US House Republicans on Monday blocked an attempt by the chamber's Democrats to pass a resolution calling on Vice President Mike Pence to invoke the 25th Amendment to remove President Donald Trump from office. House Democrats asked the chamber to bring the resolution to a swift vote by unanimous consent, but Republicans objected to the move, meaning that lawmakers will first have to go through several procedural steps before the measure can be passed. House Democrats have said that if Pence does not take action to remove Trump, they will begin a process of impeaching him for inciting last week's deadly insurrection at the Capitol.

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US Sanctions Ukrainian Ex-Officials, Current Lawmaker for Alleged Interference – Treasury

WASHINGTON, January 11 (Sputnik) - The United States has imposed sanctions on four Ukrainian entities and seven Ukrainians, including former officials and a current lawmaker, over their alleged interference in the US general elections, the Treasury Department said in a press release on Monday.

"Today, the US Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) took additional action against seven individuals and four entities that are part of a Russia-linked foreign influence network associated with Andrii Derkach. Russian agent Derkach was designated on September 10, 2020, pursuant to Executive Order (E.O.) 13848, for his attempt to influence the 2020 US presidential election," the statement said.

The sanctions target former Ukrainian government officials Konstantin Kulyk, Oleksandr Onyshchenko, Andriy Telizhenko as well as current Member of Parliament Oleksandr Dubinsky for having "publicly appeared or affiliated themselves with Derkach through the coordinated dissemination and promotion of fraudulent and unsubstantiated allegations involving a US political candidate," the statement said.

Derkach, who was designated by the OFAC in September, is the Ukrainian parliamentarian who provided tapes that revealed then-US Vice President and present-day President-elect Joe Biden exerted pressure on then-Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko concerning the latter's domestic affairs.

Also included in the latest round of sanctions are Anton Simonenko, Petro Zhuravel, Dmytro Kovalchuk as well as media entities Era Media, Only News, Nabuleaks and Skeptik.

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Former US Presidents Bush, Obama to Join Biden Inauguration - Event Committee CEO

WASHINGTON, January 11 (Sputnik) - Former presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama will join President-elect Joe Biden at his January 20 inauguration and lay wreaths for the fallen US soldiers at the Arlington National Cemetery, Presidential Inauguration Committee Chief Executive Tony Allen said in a statement on Monday.

"They will lay a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, honoring our men and women in uniform who paid the ultimate sacrifice in defense of our common values," Allen said. "This will be one of the President-elect's first acts as Commander-in-Chief, and he will be joined by President Barack Obama and Michelle Obama, President George W. Bush and Laura Bush, and President Bill Clinton and Secretary Hillary Clinton."

Incumbent President Donald Trump, who has refused to concede his election loss to Biden, has tweeted that he would not attend Biden's inauguration. Biden has said he agreed that Trump should not be present at the event.

However, Biden said he welcomed incumbent Vice President Mike Pence to the inauguration. Pence reportedly plans to attend the event.

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US State Dept. to Notify Congress of Intent to Designate Houthis as Terror Group - Pompeo

WASHINGTON, January 11 (Sputnik) - The US State Department intends to notify Congress of its plans to designate Yemen's Houthis as a terrorist organization, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said in a statement on Monday.

"The Department of State will notify Congress of my intent to designate Ansarallah - sometimes referred to as the Houthis - as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO), under section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act, and as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist (SDGT) entity, pursuant to Executive Order 13224," Pompeo said.

Pompeo also revealed the plans to designate three Houthi leaders - Abdul Malik al-Houthi, Abd al-Khaliq Badr al-Din al-Houthi and Abdullah Yahya al Hakim, as Specially Designated Global Terrorists.

"The designations are also intended to advance efforts to achieve a peaceful, sovereign, and united Yemen that is both free from Iranian interference and at peace with its neighbors," he said. "Progress in addressing Yemen's instability can only be made when those responsible for obstructing peace are held accountable for their actions."

Pompeo note that the United States recognizes concerns the designations will affect the humanitarian situation in Yemen and is set to put in place measures to reduce their impact on certain humanitarian activities as well as imports into the country.

"We have expressed our readiness to work with relevant officials at the United Nations, with international and non-governmental organizations, and other international donors to address these implications," he said. "As part of this effort... the US Department of the Treasury is prepared to provide licenses pursuant to its authorities and corresponding guidance that relate to the official activities of the United States government in Yemen, including assistance programming that continues to be the largest of any donor and the official activities of certain international organizations such as the United Nations."

Pompeo pointed out the licenses and guidance will also apply to certain humanitarian activities carried out by non-governmental organizations in Yemen and to certain transactions and activities concerning exports to Yemen of critical commodities.

"We are working to ensure that essential lifelines and engagements that support a political track and return to dialogue continue to the maximum extent possible," Pompeo said.

The ongoing hostile US policy against the Houthi rebel movement could force the group to interact with Washington in the same manner, the movement's spokesman Mohammed Abdul Salam, told Sputnik on Monday.

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US Capital Requests Cancellation of Public Gatherings Through January 24 - Mayor

WASHINGTON, January 11 (Sputnik) - Washington, DC has asked the federal authorities to cancel all permits for public gatherings in the US capital through the presidential inauguration following last week's Capitol unrest, Mayor Muriel Bowser told reporters on Monday.

"I am requesting that the Secretary of the Department of Interior cancel any and all Public Gathering Permits in the District of Columbia and deny any applications for Public Gathering Permits during the period of January 11-24, 2021," Bowser said in a press briefing. She encouraged Americans to participate in Joe Biden's inauguration on January 20 "virtually."

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New York Bar Association Launches Inquiry Into Removing Trump's Lawyer Giuliani

WASHINGTON, January 11 (Sputnik) - The New York State Bar Association (NYSBA) said in a statement on Monday that it has launched an inquiry to determine whether US President Donald Trump's personal attorney Rudolph Giuliani should be stripped of membership following last week's unrest on Capitol Hill.

"NYSBA President Scott M. Karson has launched an inquiry pursuant to the Association's bylaws to determine whether Mr. Giuliani should be removed from the membership rolls of the Association," the statement said.

The NYSBA noted it is the largest voluntary state bar association in the United States and has a responsibility to defend and protect the rule of law.

Hours before Trump supporters stormed the Capitol building, Giuliani addressed them at the White House reiterating "baseless claims of widespread election fraud in the presidential election and the Georgia US Senate runoffs," the statement said.

NYSBA's bylaws state that no person who advocates the overthrow of the government of the United States, or of any state or territory by force or other illegal means, will be a member of the Association.

"Mr. Giuliani's words quite clearly were intended to encourage Trump supporters unhappy with the election's outcome to take matters into their own hands. Their subsequent attack on the Capitol was nothing short of an attempted coup, intended to prevent the peaceful transition of power," the statement said.

On Wednesday, Trump supporters stormed the Capitol building in a bid to protest Congress for certifying the election results, which they consider to be invalid. The protesters clashed with police and damaged property before seizing the rotunda and inauguration stage. The attack marked the most significant breach of US Capitol grounds since the British set fire to it in 1814.

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US House to Consider Article to Impeach Trump on Wednesday or Thursday - Lawmaker

WASHINGTON, January 11 (Sputnik) - The US House of Representatives will vote as early as Wednesday on an Article of Impeachment against President Donald Trump over his role in the storming of the Capitol, Rules Committee Chairman Jim McGovern said in an interview on Monday.

"I expect that he will be impeached. He will be the first president in history to be impeached twice," McGovern told CNN in an interview. Asked whether he thought the vote would happen on Wednesday or Thursday, McGovern said, "I do."

McGovern said House lawmakers are still working out the details of the process but he expects that the measure will come to the floor as early Wednesday.

"We expect this up on the floor on Wednesday, and I expect it will pass," he said.

The Democrat-led House of Representatives is set to introduce articles of impeachment against Trump later on Monday in the wake of the Capitol Hill riot, when thousands of the president's supporters stormed the Capitol building in a bid to prevent Congress from certifying President-elect Joe Biden's election victory.